

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 12599

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, ICRC, ID
SUBJECT: ICRC VISIT TO INDONESIA

REF: A. GENEVA 11016; B. JAKARTA 16899; C. JAKARTA 17097

1. ICRC DELEGATE GENERAL FOR THE FAR EAST, MICHEL CONVERS, WHO RETURNED FROM HIS TRIP TO THAILAND AND INDONESIA OVER THE WEEKEND OF DECEMBER 11, TOLD MISOFF THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH INDONESIAN AUTHORITIES HAD BEEN GENERALLY POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE, AND THAT HE WAS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC THAT ICRC COULD SUCCESSFULLY RESUME ITS VISITS TO INDONESIAN PRISONS AND DETENTION CENTERS.
2. CONVERS SAID THAT THERE WERE CURRENTLY 30,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN INDONESIA, OF WHOM 10,000 WOULD BE RELEASED THIS MONTH, AND ANOTHER 10,000 IN THE COURSE OF 1978 (ANNOUNCED IN LOCAL PRESS DECEMBER 20, SUBSEQUENT TO THIS INTERVIEW). HE THOUGHT THAT THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT HAD FELT ITSELF OBLIGED TO TAKE THIS MEASURE, DUE INTER ALIA TO THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF PROCESSING THE LARGE NUMBERS OF POLITICAL DETAINEES IT HELD THROUGH THE INDONESIAN COURT SYSTEM.

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3. IN ANY EVENT, AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED THAT THE FIRST ICRC TEAM UNDER DELEGATE PIERRE GUBERAN WOULD BEGIN ITS WORK IN MID-JANUARY. VISITS WOULD START IN JAVA IN THE JAKARTA AREA, IN ORDER THAT IF SNAGS DEVELOPED AT AN EARLY STAGE, THEY MIGHT BE RESOLVED THROUGH PROMPT DIRECT INTERVENTION WITH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS CONCERNED. (CONVERS STATED THAT WHILE HE FELT THE PROJECT

HAD THE GENERAL UNDERSTANDING AND APPROVAL OF HIGH OFFICIALS IN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, IT WAS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THIS ATTITUDE MIGHT NOT BE SHARED BY LOCAL SECURITY OFFICIALS AND THAT THEREFORE OBSTRUCTIONS COULD ARISE AGAINST SATISFACTORY EXECUTION OF THE ICRC MISSIONS.) CONVERS EXPLAINED THAT ANOTHER REASON FOR BEGINNING ICRC'S WORK IN JAVA WAS THAT THE CENTERS WHERE THE BULK OF THE PRISONERS WERE HELD (INCLUDING ONE OF 12,000 PEOPLE---SALEMBA?) COULD BE MORE READILY REACHED THAN THE FAR-FLUNG AND LESS POPULOUS ONES ON ISLANDS THROUGHOUT THE ARCHIPELAGO. IN DECEMBER 21 MEETING WITH WHITE HOUSE ASSISTANT DR. PETER BOURNE, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO ICRC PRESIDENT, RICHARD PESTALOZZI, STATED THAT SOME OF THESE SMALLER AND FURTHER REMOVED CAMPS WOULD BE CLOSED IN WAKE OF PRISONER RELEASES.

4. CONVERS SAID THAT THE ONLY HIGH OFFICIAL HE HAD DEALT WITH DURING HIS VISIT WAS THE ACTING MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ALSO CONCURRENTLY MINISTER OF JUSTICE (KUSUMAATMADJA) WHO HAD A DETAILED KNOWLEDGE OF ICRC'S WORK AND HAD, IN FACT, TRANSLATED THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS INTO INDONESIAN. OTHERWISE, CONVERS WORKED WITH LESSER OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE ARMY GENERAL AIDE TO ADMIRAL SUDOMO, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS MOST COOPERATIVE. CONVERS EXPLAINED THAT, THE GENERAL AGREEMENT FOR THE MISSIONS HAVING BEEN CONCLUDED IN NOVEMBER, THE PURPOSE OF HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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VISIT WAS SIMPLY TO ESTABLISH MODALITIES AND THE GROUND RULES UNDER WHICH THE MISSIONS WOULD OPERATE.

5. THE TEAM UNDER GUBERAN WILL PROBABLY CONSIST OF FOUR MEN, INCLUDING A DOCTOR, AND WILL REMAIN IN THE AREA FOR SOME THREE TO FOUR MONTHS. A SECOND TEAM MAY JOIN IT, IF NECESSARY, AFTER AN ASSESSMENT HAS BEEN MADE BASED ON THE FIRST FEW MONTHS EXPERIENCE. CONVERS ESTIMATES THAT, SHOULD MATTERS GO WELL, THERE WILL BE AT LEAST ONE RED CROSS TEAM IN THE AREA AT ANY TIME FOR AN INDEFINITE FUTURE PERIOD, SINCE BY THE TIME THE PERIOD OF INITIAL VISITATIONS OF ALL DETENTION CENTERS WILL HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, SECONDARY FOLLOW-UP ROUNDS WILL HAVE TO BE UNDERTAKEN.

6. COMMENT: RE REF B, CONVERS DID NOT MENTION TIMOR, WHICH WOULD BEAR OUT KUSUMAATMADJA'S ASSERTION THAT MATTER HAD NOT BEEN RAISED, AS WELL AS CONVERS' STATEMENT THAT PURPOSE OF HIS MISSION WAS SOLELY TO ESTABLISH MODALITIES UNDER WHICH PRISON VISITATIONS WOULD BE CONDUCTED. MAJOR DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN CONVERS' VERSION OF UNDERSTANDING AND THAT REPORTED BY INDONESIANS APPEARS TO BE PLANNED

LENGTH OF ICRC VISITS TO DETENTION CENTERS. AS INDICATED
ABOVE, CONVERS ENVISIONS EXTENDED STAY OF TEAM(S) IN AREA
WHILE LIM BIAN KIE REPORTS (REF C) THAT VISITS WILL BE
OF RELATIVELY SHORT DURATION. HOWEVER, THIS DIFFERENCE
WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE IMPORTANT SUBJECT OF NEGOTIATION AFTER
ARRIVAL OF GUBERAN TEAM IN JAKARTA. END COMMENT.
VANDEN HEUVEL

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